



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



MILITARY POLICE SOLDIERS DEPLOY FOR AFGHANISTAN

Hundreds of family members, friends, and co-workers joined together at the Stevens High School gymnasium for a deployment ceremony for 124 soldiers of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 235th Military Police Company, Saturday, Feb. 2.

The Rapid City and Sioux Falls-based 235th will serve a year-long tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The unit's mission is to provide security for U.S. military personnel, installation, and facilities and to guard prisoners of war and civilian internees.

This is the third mobilization for the 235th – deploying in support of Operation Noble Eagle in Fort Carson, Colo., in 2003, as well as in support of OEF in Afghanistan in 2006.

"The service the 235th has provided to our state and nation is incredible," said Gov. Dennis Daugaard, a featured speaker during the ceremony. "You've provided support to our state during the 2000 Jasper Fire and 2011 Missouri River Flood, as well as deployed to Fort Carson, Colorado, after 9/11 and to Afghanistan in 2006. Today, you deploy again once more and have answered the call of your nation."

"The South Dakota National Guard has a rich history of deploying service members in times of need," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the SDNG, during the ceremony. "The 235th adds to that heritage. "The South Dakota Guard has been sending people out the door to do missions the state and nation has needed for 151 years," continued Reisch. "We have developed a tremendous legacy over that century and a half. There is no question that the 235th will continue to enhance the legacy of our organization."

The unit will report to Fort Bliss, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deploying overseas.



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VETERAN RECEIVES DIPLOMA 65 YEARS LATER

One member of the Bon Homme High School Class of 1947 received his high school diploma 65 years after the rest of his classmates. Stanley Varliek, a Korean War Veteran, received his high school diploma January 14, 2013, during the Bon Homme High School Board meeting.

A life member of Kortan-Hatwan American Legion Post #183, Tabor, Stanley learned of the ability to receive his diploma through one of the veteran's magazines he receives. He contacted Richard Beringer, Bon Homme County Veteran Services Officer, and the rest is history.

Stanley attended one year of high school and then left to help his father on the farm. He joined the United States Marine Corps in 1951 and spent 15 months in Japan with Security Forces Far East. Stanley was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal, and United States Service Medal.

Following his return from service, Stanley farmed and then worked construction.

Stanley commented that receiving the diploma meant more to him now than it would have 65 years ago. All eight of Varilek's children are graduates of the Bon Homme School District and he is proud to also have received his diploma from Bon Homme.

After Varilek received his diploma at the January school board meeting, he arrived home to a surprise graduation party hosted by his children and grandchildren.

Others veterans receiving diplomas but unable to attend were:

- Richard A. Mennis of San Diego, CA. Mr. Mennis served 21 years, 8 months in the US Navy. He was awarded a 4th Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal W/"V", Combat Action Ribbon, Vietnam Service Medal, Rifle Marksmanship Ribbon, Navy "E", Navy Achievement Medal, Navy Expeditionary Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, Meritorious Unit Commendation, and the Antarctic Service Medal.
- Russell D Hamilton, Avon, had three years, five months, eleven days in the Air Force with 11 months and 23 days of foreign service. He was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, two Air Force Medals 900-3, Vietnam Service medal with two Bronze Stars, and the Air Force Good Conduct Medal w/Oak Leaf Cluster.
- John (Jack) Lee Beringer, deceased, served three years in the Marines and one year, three months, ten days foreign service. He was awarded the National Defense Service Medal and Good Conduct Medal. Jack passed away November 27, 2012.

Receiving the honorary diploma's for those not able to attend was Richard D. Beringer, Bon Homme County Veterans Service Officer, and George Arends, South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Field Officer.

Beringer commented, "On behalf of Bon Homme County and the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, we extend our sincere gratitude to these veterans and all veterans for the giving of themselves."

At the February school board meeting, Herbert C. Gottschalk will be awarded his honorary diploma.



George Arends (SDDVA), Rich Beringer (BHC VSO), Stanley Varliek, and Dr. Bryce Knudson (BHC Superintendent)



DAUGAARD SUPPORTS MILITARY FAMILIES

Last year, I had the opportunity to join a Department of Defense trip to Kuwait and Afghanistan to visit South Dakota troops who were serving in those countries. Seeing the bleak landscape of Afghanistan and the extreme desert conditions made me appreciate even more the sacrifice that every member of our military makes for our nation.

It is not just these brave men and women who make sacrifices – their families sacrifice as well.

Just as we have military men and women overseas, there are other servicemen and women serving much closer to home here in South Dakota. Many of them are stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base. I have made a proposal to the Legislature for the benefit of those families.

Thirty-five percent of military spouses in the workforce are in professions that require professional licensure or certification. When a military family is transferred to our state, that family should not lose earning power for an extended period while a spouse seeks licensure in South Dakota.

That is why I proposed a professional licensure portability bill for military spouses. It has been introduced to the Legislature as Senate Bill 117. The bill will streamline the process so that a military spouse with a license or certificate in another state can easily transfer into South Dakota.

Nearly half of our sister states have approved similar legislation, and I hope that the Legislature approves the measure, allowing South Dakota to join those states.

Our military men and women are devoted to our country. They endure greatly for us. They risk their lives and sacrifice much. One sacrifice our military families should not have to make is waiting for government to approve their ability to make a living after moving to South Dakota.

SB117 will let military families know that South Dakota welcomes them and values their great contribution to our nation.



VABHHCS TO HOST SALUTE TO HOSPITALIZED VETERANS OPEN HOUSES

The VA Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS) invites the public to participate in open-house activities February 10-16, during the observance of *National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans*.

"The *National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans* gives everyone a chance to let those who have given our nation so much; know that they are not forgotten," said VA BHHCS Voluntary Service Coordinator Cheryl Rieniets. "We've scheduled activities to bring veterans and visitors together throughout the week. We welcome people of all ages to bring Valentine cheer to our veterans."

The annual VA National Salute program began in 1978 and is traditionally held the week of Valentine's Day, kicking off with VA's popular *Valentines for Vets* program. Individuals, veterans' groups, military personnel, civic organizations, businesses, schools, local media, celebrities and sports stars traditionally deliver valentines or visit the more than 98,000 veterans of the U.S. armed services who are cared for every day in VA medical facilities, outpatient clinics, domiciliaries, and community living centers.

Local Salute Week highlights include the annual Four Chaplains Day memorial service at Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Sturgis on February 10; a social and Bingo for veterans on the community living centers; a poker night for veterans in the domiciliary in Hot Springs on February 11; distribution of Valentines and gifts to veterans in the community living centers; a trip to the RUSH Hockey game on February 12; a visit from congressional aides, who will be available to visit with any veterans in Fort Meade on February 13 and Hot Springs on February 14; a carnival for veterans in Hot Springs on February 16; and a pizza party, game night and special dinners throughout the week.

"VA volunteers are an integral part of our health care team and the National Salute program is a great way for people to learn more about helping the veterans we serve," Rieniets said.

While the National Salute kicks off in mid-February, Americans have the chance to show their appreciation to veterans all year by volunteering their time or donating to VA medical facilities throughout the year. No medical experience is necessary and volunteers are encouraged to share ideas on how they would like to 'give back' using their unique skills. To find opportunities or for more information on the week's events, call the Fort Meade VA Medical Center Voluntary Services at 605-347-7206 or the Hot Springs VA Medical Center Voluntary Services at 605-745-2865. Take every day to thank a veteran!



VA ISSUES NEW REPORT ON SUICIDE DATA

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released a comprehensive report on veterans who died by suicide. In the past, data on veterans who died by suicide was only available for those who had sought VA health care services. Today's report also includes state data for veterans who had not received health care services from the VA, which will help the VA strengthen its aggressive suicide prevention activities. The report indicates that the percentage of veterans who die by suicide has decreased slightly since 1999, while the estimated total number of veterans who have died by suicide has increased.

In accordance with the President's Aug. 31, 2012, Executive Order, the VA has completed hiring and training of additional staff to increase the capacity of the Veterans Crisis Line by 50 percent. The Veteran Crisis Line has made approximately 26,000 rescues of actively suicidal veterans to date. Additionally, the VA has initiated a year-long public awareness campaign, "Stand By Them," to educate families and friends on how to seek help for veterans and service members in crisis. The VA has launched a national public service announcement "[Side by Side](#)."

The VA is currently engaged in an aggressive hiring campaign to expand access to mental health services with 1,600 new clinical staff, 300 new administrative staff, and is in the process of hiring and training 800 peer-to-peer specialists who will work as members of mental health teams.

This report is the most comprehensive study of veteran suicide rates ever undertaken by the VA. On June 16, 2010, Secretary Shinseki engaged governors of all 50 states, requesting their support in helping to collect suicide statistics. With assistance from state partners providing real-time data, the VA is better able to assess the effectiveness of its suicide prevention programs and identify specific populations that need targeted interventions.

This new information will allow the VA to better identify where those veterans at risk may be located and improve the Department's ability to target specific suicide interventions and outreach activities in order to reach veterans early and proactively. The data will also help the VA continue to examine the effectiveness of suicide prevention programs being implemented in specific geographic locations or care settings in order to replicate them in other areas if they have been effective.

The VA has implemented comprehensive, broad ranging suicide prevention initiatives, including a toll-free Veterans Crisis Line, placement of Suicide Prevention Coordinators at all VA Medical Centers and large outpatient facilities, and improvements in case management and reporting. Immediate help is available at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net or by calling the Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (push 1) or texting 838255.



Suicide Data Report 2012 final

<http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/Suicide-Data-Report-2012-final.pdf>

Veterans Health Administration Response - Suicide Data Report 2012

<http://www.va.gov/opa/docs/Response-and-ExecSum-Suicide-Data-Report-2012-final.pdf>

SD GUARD NAMES NEW SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER

South Dakota Air National Guard Chief Master Sgt. James Welch, of Sioux Falls, is the state's first senior enlisted leader for the South Dakota National Guard. Welch is the first noncommissioned officer from either the South Dakota Army or Air National Guard to be named to the new position.

Welch was appointed to the position during a ceremony on Saturday, Feb. 2, at the Joint Force Headquarters building on Camp Rapid. Welch will serve as an advisor to the state's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, on all enlisted matters concerning the Guard's 4,300 soldiers and airmen, including health, morale, welfare and readiness.

"My duties and responsibilities are to provide leadership for the total enlisted force of the South Dakota National Guard, both Army and Air," said Welch. "Whether this position is held by an Air or Army National Guardsman should not matter. It comes down to taking care of our soldiers and airmen, doing the right things and leading by example."

Prior to the position of senior enlisted leader, Welch served as the noncommissioned-officer-in-charge of operations for the 114th Civil Engineer Squadron, the 114th Fighter Wing command chief and state command chief for the South Dakota Air National Guard.

"Chief Master Sgt. Welch has a long record of exemplary service, which includes time in the regular Air Force, the South Dakota Army National Guard and the South Dakota Air National Guard," said Maj. Gen. Reisch. "He is exceptionally well prepared to perform the duties and responsibilities of this position and I look forward to working with him in this new capacity."

Welch said one of his priorities is to ensure the best for the soldiers and airmen working in the SDNG. "With the cost cutting measures taking place, it's high on my list to make sure that our soldiers and airmen do not lose the level of readiness and training they presently have," said Welch. "They need to be mission capable and support the war efforts, as well as support South Dakota,"

Welch enlisted in the Air Force in 1975 as a cable splicing specialist and was stationed at Griffis Air Force Base, N.Y. He obtained the rank of buck sergeant (E-4) and was honorably discharged in 1979. In 1981, he enlisted in the South Dakota Army National Guard as a 12B (engineer) and obtained the rank of sergeant (E-5). In October 1982, Welch transferred to the South Dakota Air National Guard as a refrigeration and air-conditioning technician. By January 2000, he rose to the position of noncommissioned officer-in-charge of operations in the 114th Civil Engineer Squadron, and later assumed the 114th Fighter Wing command chief position in October 2006. He served as the state command chief for the SDANG since March 2010.

Welch and his wife Mary (Sioux Falls) have two children, Nicholas of Sioux Falls and Amy of Denver.



SD ARMY GUARD APPOINTS FIRST FEMALE TO TOP ENLISTED POSITION

The South Dakota Army National Guard appointed its first female to the highest ranking senior-enlisted position in the state during a change of responsibility ceremony Saturday, Feb. 2, at the Joint Force Headquarters building on Camp Rapid.

Command Sgt. Maj. Susan Shoe replaces State Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman as the new state command sergeant major, the highest ranking non-commissioned officer position for the South Dakota Army National Guard.

Shoe becomes the first female to serve in the position, as well as the 8th state command sergeant major, since the position was first established in the state in 1975. In this role, Shoe will serve as the assistant adjutant general's personal advisor on all enlisted matters for the Army Guard.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Shoe was selected for this position from five of our top senior NCO applicants from within the Army National Guard," said Brig. Gen. Craig Johnson, assistant adjutant general of the SDARNG, during the ceremony. "Her personal qualifications, leadership ability, competency, and can-do attitude distinguished her as the right person, at the right time, to lead our NCO Corps."

"This selection means a great deal to me, and I am honored to have been selected as the first female command sergeant major for South Dakota," said Shoe. "I have so much pride for the coyote patch on our left sleeve and I will champion its history and its future for those past and present and all this patch represents."

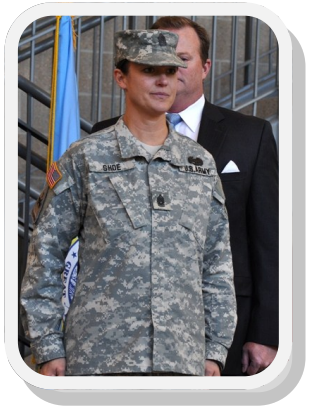
During the ceremony, many guests, friends and family members gathered to honor and thank Zimmerman for his service and to welcome Shoe as she begins her new assignment.

Shoe, who has more than 23 years of military service, 16 of those as a member of the SDARNG, will also continue her full-time duties as the senior logistics NCO for Joint Force Headquarters. Shoe will be responsible for assisting and advising Brig. Gen. Johnson, as well as advising the state's new senior enlisted advisor, Chief Master Sgt. James Welch, on all soldier issues that affect the enlisted and NCO Corps within the nearly 3,300 members of the Army Guard. Shoe will also observe unit training in all 24 SDARNG communities, attend mobilization and de-mobilization events, ensure soldier morale and well-being and make certain soldiers and their families know that all key leaders have their best interests at heart.

Throughout her career in the Guard, Shoe's assignments include: personnel administrative sergeant, legal NCO, training NCO, readiness NCO, personnel services NCO, team leader, quality assurance NCO, operations sergeant, warrant officer candidate school instructor and senior logistics NCO.

Shoe lives in Rapid City with her husband, David, and her two rescue Italian greyhounds.

"I am very proud of the long lineage my family has given to our state and nation. My husband is prior-service Army, my father, Neil Harris, served more than 43 years between the Army and the SDARNG, my stepfather served as a doctor in the Army, and my great-uncle was a captain in the U.S. Navy and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery," said Shoe. "I couldn't be more proud to be in this position to continue my family history and serve others as my relatives served before me."



Upcoming Events

Feb. 8-10—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Cedar Shores in Oacoma
Feb 10—Four Chaplains Memorial Service—St Francis Assissi Church—Sturgis—1:30 pm
Feb. 9—SFVAHCS Valentines for Veterans Concert—Washington Pavilion—Sioux Falls, SD—3:00 pm
Feb. 16—SFVAHCS Variety Show—2:00 pm
Mar. 14—VABHHCS Veterans Creative Arts Show—Fort Meade
Apr. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
May 3-5—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood
May 11—Yellow Ribbon for the 935th—Rapid City
May 19—Yellow Ribbon for the 927th—Sioux Falls
Jul. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
Oct. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
Dec. 15—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Black Hills National Cemetery—10:00 am

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